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Trinity and Revelation for the Pluralistic World

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation. A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014. £26.99. pp. ix + 472. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6854-1).

Christendom has fallen. Theology, as queen of the sciences, has been dethroned. Yet the picture is not bleak for constructive theology. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is no stranger to the riches offered by different cultures and contexts for theological enquiry. He has lived and taught in Europe, Asia, and North America, and has authored or edited over two dozen theological books – many which engage various global perspectives.

Kärkkäinen's latest project continues this theme in a planned five-volume constructive theology for the pluralistic world. This review examines the second volume of the set which has two parts, 'Triune Revelation' and 'Triune God', and focuses on two of the many important insights offered by its fifteen chapters.

The first is his proposal of 'classical panentheism' (ch. 10). Firstly, he argues that 'classical theism', which speaks of a God Who is impassible, immutable, simple, etc., is the result of postbiblical developments based on Greco-Roman philosophy, and has lost its viability in the current pluralistic context. Secondly, he finds 'contemporary panentheism' coming from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, process theology, and some liberation theologies as helpful in rejecting God's impassibility in light of a world of suffering, injustice, and inequality; but it is also problematic to an understanding of God's transcendence. In contrast, 'classical panentheism' is rooted in a biblical and theological tradition that speaks of a God who is above the world yet within the world – transcendent yet immanent – with implications for contemporary philosophy, science, and theology.

The second key contribution is the engagement with other living faiths – an exercise in comparative theology modelled after Keith Ward. Chapter eight, for example, puts the Christian understanding of scripture and revelation in conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism. This highlights important nuanced views of scripture (written or oral), canon (closed or open), commentary traditions, etc. In 'Triune God', Kärkkäinen argues for a Trinitarian theology of religions (ch. 14), gleaning a bit from his work *Trinity and Religious Pluralism* (Ashgate, 2004), and provides a comparison of the Trinity with various religious understandings of the 'ultimate reality' (ch. 15).

This reviewer wonders how the volume would have been different if Kärkkäinen more intentionally engaged East Asian religions – what Hans Küng calls a 'third religious river system' after Semitic and Indian religions – or *intrafaith* approaches like the cross-scriptural methods of Aloysius Pieris, Archie C. C. Lee, and K. K. Yeo. This in no way diminishes the caliber of this volume. As also demonstrated in his earlier works, Kärkkäinen's project is rooted in the evangelical tradition yet not afraid to learn from a broad array of sources. *Trinity and Revelation* is insightful, generous, and accessible, and offers a pioneering constructive theology for the pluralistic world.

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